

FIRE WEATHER

The Central Coast has a Mediterranean climate characterized by long, dry hot summers and wet winters. Winter rainfall can exceed 60 inches. The San Mateo-Santa Cruz Unit sits along the San Mateo coastline and extends along the northern half of the Monterey Bay. Commonly referred to as the “sunny side” of the bay, summertime temperatures range from 60 to 70 degrees along the coast, to 80 plus degrees in the interior portions. Inland valleys frequently exceed 90 degrees.

The Unit Climate Class Description (from the National Fire Danger Rating System) was changed in 1999 and cataloged as a Climate class 3 along the Coastal Zones. Interior Zones were classified as Climate Class 2.

Three Fire Danger Rating Areas are used to determine the fire danger within the unit. These areas exhibit significant differences.

San Mateo Coast (Zone 1): Affected by westerly breezes and fog as the result of an inland convection pattern that draws cool air off the coast during most summer days. Higher elevations in these areas are included in Zone 3.

Santa Cruz Coast (Zone 2): The south boundary of San Mateo County to the north boundary of Monterey County, this zone extends inland to the lower elevations and is affected by fog and coastal breeze intrusion.

Inland Valleys and Ridges (Zone 3): This area includes the upper elevations and inland valleys not so greatly influenced by coastal moisture and far more influenced from inland warming and lower humidity's. Frequent temperature inversions will influence this zone.

Winds are generally from the North to South West creating light summer upslope winds from mid morning to late afternoon depending on ones location. The sea breeze system is a general occurrence along the upper coastal slopes. Depending on the current yearly weather pattern, off shore or East winds may occur as early as May and then reappear through the summer months in mini-intervals commencing with larger windows of opportunity in September and October.

Analysis of statewide Fire Weather has been an ongoing project. Unit discussion has led to exploring the possibility of repositioning the following RAWS sites to a more favorable and representative location:

La Honda to an upper slope placement in La Honda
Corralitos to the Pajaro Valley Fire Station